



FROM MEDICI TO
MONTICI





Exhibition
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507 W 27th St
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FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI

Richard Blow and the Modern Pietre Dure

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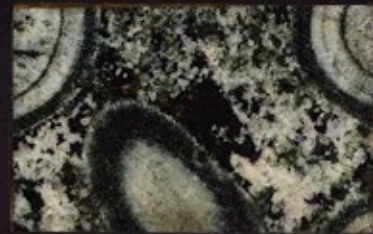
It is made in pietre dure, a paradigmatic technique of the Florentine Renaissance.

[It] has the eerie and inexplicable air of Surrealism.

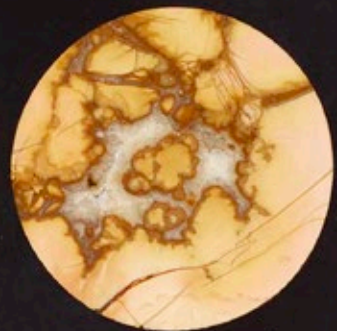
And it is so hard to place, so beguiling, that if you didn't know better,

you'd think it could have been made just yesterday.





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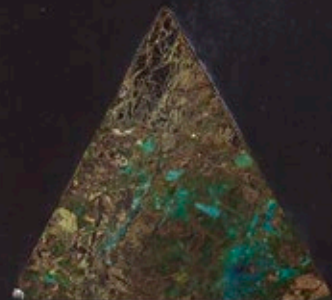
occhio di Tigre



liniato



cipollino Grecia



argentea dell'Elba



Sberze lilla





It [the work] marks a purposeful departure from the traditional style of pietre dure,

yet is a curious outlier within the history of modernism.

But of course, curiosity is just what led Blow to make his pictures in stone,

and it led him to a particular kind of magic

that no one had seen before, and few since...



I was lucky enough to find myself in the upstairs office of the Gansevoort Gallery in the late 1990s. So I had the fortunate experience of seeing some of the greatest design objects of the twentieth century—the rarest Noguchi furniture, Eames prototypes, Calder jewelry. That office felt like the epicenter of modern design. It was here that I first encountered a work by Richard Blow, a small plaque depicting a castle in the Tuscan countryside. A little trompe l’oeil, a little surreal, modernist in its visual vernacular, yet executed in a traditional manner. I was unfamiliar with *pietre dure*, the Medici, or Tuscan stones. Yet the work, handmade, honest, and charming, spoke to me. Little did I know that this small work of art with its mysterious origins would take me on a journey spanning decades.

Over the ensuing years I took every opportunity to buy and learn more about the work, but those occasions were infrequent. I could find very little history on Richard Blow or Montici, rare in the developing field of twentieth century design where furniture and objects were being vigorously researched and documented.

Then, in the Spring of 2018, I received a fortuitous call that led me to upstate New York: the chance to purchase a grouping of Blow’s work. The family I met had once run Hardstone Farm, a successful dairy farm in Dutchess County, which had been owned by Richard Blow. This is where the larger story began to unfold. The family wove a multi-generational narrative of Blow as a benevolent landowner who encouraged them to prosper as farmers and serve as caretakers of the property.

The family remembered Blow with great fondness and utmost respect. However, they didn’t know much about Blow’s life outside of Hardstone. Nonetheless, they did share with me a remarkable event from several years earlier, when family member Susan Matthews had traveled to Italy. On the last day of her trip, she arrived in Florence and as she stepped off the bus for a shopping excursion, she noticed a small *pietre dure* studio across the street. Her history with Richard Blow compelled her to enter. Miraculously, she had stumbled upon the studio of Bruno Lastrucci, Blow’s most significant collaborator. Susan and Bruno had never known of one another’s existence, yet that day they shared an emotional exchange and many stories of their time with Richard Blow, connecting the two halves of his extraordinary life.

I retraced this thread, going to Florence and the studio of Bruno Lastrucci. It proved to be the most exciting and enlightening chapter in my pursuit to unravel the mystery of Montici. I will never forget my first trip to visit Bruno. After hearing his fascinating history and exploring the studio, I noticed a few works by Blow on a far wall. Sensing my excitement, Bruno directed me to a heavy velvet curtain which he parted to reveal a collection of drawings, sketches, and paintings executed by Blow’s own hand. I was in awe to see these original works, the source materials for Montici, the basis of their long collaboration.

The Italian history of Richard Blow now began to emerge more fully, with many members of the Lastrucci family (children and dogs included) gathering around a large table for coffee and lively conversation. A picture formed of Blow as a beloved and respected figurehead in their collective memory. I was struck by the way his life in Florence mirrored the one he lived in Dutchess County. It was as if he had adopted two separate families on opposite sides of the Atlantic, fostering a farm with one and nurturing an artistic collaboration with the other. And while in many ways his lifestyle spoke to his class and position in society, in the end he bequeathed each of his properties to the families with whom he collaborated and had become close to over the years.

I want to share my deepest respect and appreciation to the Lastrucci family for their warmth, generosity of time, and willingness to share their stories of Montici and Richard Blow. It was a great honor to be invited to Studio Lastrucci to meet Maestro Bruno, his family, and to be given the unique opportunity to tell the story of Montici. The transcripts from our numerous conversations formed the primary source material for Glenn Adamson’s essay, included in this catalogue. I would also like to thank Susan Matthews and her mother, Eileen McKiernan, who graciously shared their time and stories and put me on the path of discovery. It was through these two families that the story of Richard Blow was revealed. His life was nothing short of cinematic: born into great wealth, he was a war hero, an artist, and an entrepreneur. His vision singlehandedly reframed and revitalized the ancient craft of *pietre dure*.

Con affetto e rispetto.

Adam Edelsberg



MONTICI

Glenn Adamson

Richard Blow and the Modern *Pietre Dure*

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The hand is just five inches by nine, but it seems to hold a whole world—embedded as it is with the riches of the earth’s crust—and a great deal of art history, as well.

It is made in *pietre dure*, a paradigmatic technique of the Florentine Renaissance. The black silhouette, floating on a field of cloudy red, has the eerie and inexplicable air of Surrealism. And it is so hard to place, so beguiling, that if you didn’t know better, you’d think it could have been made just yesterday.

In fact, the hand is one of hundreds of works designed by the painter Richard Blow for Montici, an extraordinary workshop that he set up in Tuscany just after World War II. From 1947 through his death in 1983, he collaborated with skilled artisans to produce some of postwar Italy’s most unusual artworks. If it is initially difficult to situate the *pietre dure* of Montici in time, it is equally challenging to categorize. Is this fine or decorative art? Craft or design? Modernist or revivalist? Pictures or objects?

The answer is that they are all of these, and more. Though executed in a process so antiquated that it was threatened with outright disappearance before



Blow took an interest in it, the production at Montici also looked ahead to the cross-disciplinary energies of the present day, when artists move fluidly across media and genres. The workshop’s story is also fascinating as a collaboration

lower left: Lot 150 top right: Richard Blow portrait



across social class—between a wealthy American and the artisans that realized his vision—and most of all, as a case study in handmade modernism.

Blow’s work at Montici closely parallels other collaborations in what were, at the time, considered “minor art” disciplines: pottery, tapestry and stained glass by figures like Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Joan Miró. In the Italian context, the use of hardstone to create progressive art had a counterpart in ceramics by Lucio Fontana, Fausto Melotti, and Leoncillo Leonardi, among others. *Pietre dure* can also be likened to marquetry—both are types of *intarsia* work—as well as murals, mosaic, and even printmaking, in that it involves a translation of the artist’s image (what a weaver would call a “cartoon”) into a wholly different medium. This is where Montici is unique, for the demands and possibilities of stone are extremely specific, and no other workshop explored them in such a sustained and imaginative manner.

Richard Allmand Blow’s story begins in La Salle, Illinois, about 100 miles southwest of Chicago—already a quick route in the nineteenth century, thanks to a canal that connected the two cities in the 1840s. Goods of various kinds flowed along this artery, including locally mined coal, as well as zinc—which was smelted for the first time in

America in La Salle, giving it the nickname of “zinc city.” Blow was born there in 1904, to considerable wealth. His mother, Adele Matthiesen, was an heiress in the Danish family that dominated the local zinc industry. She was also an artist, who had studied in Paris. His father George, originally from Virginia, was a military man with a colorful career. After graduating from the US Naval Academy in 1883, he had sailed all the way to Alaska around Cape Horn (the Panama Canal had not yet been dug). He captained a failed attempt to raise an eighteenth-century British warship, the HMS De Braak, out of Delaware Bay. And in February 1898, he found himself stationed on the USS Maine when it mysteriously exploded in Havana Harbor. Pounced upon by a nationalistic press, the event helped to trigger the Spanish-American War and George Blow was fortunate to survive it. But it was his marriage to Adele that really brought him to prominence. With her father’s support, he assumed leadership roles in La Salle’s booming industrial economy.

Richard was raised on the family estate, Deer Park, along with three siblings; he later recalled trailing behind his mother as they both made drawings of the landscape. He went back east for school, first in Virginia and then at Lawrenceville, a prestigious preparatory school near Princeton University. Perhaps he felt at home in the stately surroundings—the grounds there were designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. As must have been expected, he then went on to study at Princeton—he was in the Class of 1925—and while at the university, further sharpened his artistic talents, contributing cartoons for the student magazine, *The Tiger*.



Upon graduating, Blow briefly studied with the Chicago painter Leon Kroll (in 1931, he acquired from the older artist an impressive painting, depicting a nude reclining in front of a city skyline, now in the Hirshhorn Museum). Kroll’s precise yet atmospheric style did not settle into his bones, however. Already by 1926, he was in Paris, taking in the fading energies of Cubism and the rising tide of Surrealism. He married there that year, to a woman named Eleanor Pettinos—an ideal match. Two years younger than him, she too was the child of an industrial pioneer, Charles E. Pettinos, known as “the Graphite King” for his development of that industry in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. And she too was raised in privilege, in a Park Avenue apartment, socializing with the great families of New York—Astors, Rockefellers, and Roosevelts—in parties at the Plaza and the Ritz. In 1920, the Pettinos family built a house called “Thatch Cottage.” Her young life was positively Gatsbyesque.

Blow’s early style as a painter was heavily influenced by the School of Paris. He had another short stint of training with André Lhote, who combined Cubist composition with the hot coloring associated with earlier Fauvism; and like anyone else trying to become a modernist at the time, had the work of Picasso looming in front of him. Picasso’s work at the time exemplified a more general *rappel a l’ordre* (“return to order”), a term coined by Jean

Cocteau to refer to a turn back to monumental classicism, which could also be seen in the work of Fernand Léger, Georges Braque, and other former Cubists.

Blow’s early paintings reflected this classicizing tendency, as well as the influence of Surrealist dreamscapes, particularly those of the Italian artist Giorgio de Chirico; he is also thought to have been friendly with Max Ernst. A picture simply called *The Painter* shows a tiny artist—perhaps an allegorical self-portrait—seated at the foot of a perfectly domed mountain. Atop this strange geological feature is a piece of imaginary architecture. The image suggests a magical occurrence, as if the top of a Renaissance tower had been instantly transported to a desert island. As in Romantic landscape paintings, there is a certain sublimity in the conception, a reflection on the artist’s awe before his own subject. The picture is also of interest because it represents a high-water mark in Blow’s early professional career, having been featured in a one-man exhibition at Maynard Walker Gallery in New York, and then acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

It is not surprising that *The Painter* has Italianate qualities, for in 1927, Blow and his new wife had purchased a property there: a beautiful but thoroughly dilapidated villa called Piazza Calda, located in the hills just south of Florence, near the little town of Santa Margherita a Montici. Immediately they plunged into restoring the house, working with the British architect and landscape designer Cecil Pinsent—a trusted advisor among the English-speaking expatriates then drawn to Tuscany. (Pinsent is best known for his work with Bernard Berenson at the Villa I Tatti in Florence,



opposite: Leon Kroll, *Reclining Nude in Interior*, 1929. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
below: *Autumn afternoon*, 1914, by Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978), oil on canvas, 48x69 cm. Italy, 20th century, Chirico, Giorgio de (1888-1978) / G. Dagli Orti / De Agostini Picture Library / Bridgeman Images © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome

today a research center operated by Harvard University.) A terraced garden was constructed, a swimming pool put in. Stones were brought from the famous *pietraforte* quarry at Monte Ripaldi, terracotta from Impruneta, the historic source for Florence’s iconic roof tiles. Perhaps these high-quality materials started Blow’s mind turning toward *pietre dure*.

The following year, 1928, Richard and Eleanor had a son whom they named Marco. In 1933, they divorced—though remained on good terms—and four years later, Blow married again. His new wife, Marya Mannes, was also from the upper crust. Her parents were prominent classical musicians, and had founded a music college in New York. When she married Blow, she was just beginning work writing and modeling for *Vogue* magazine, and was also making sculpture. Mannes went on to have a distinguished career as a critic and poet for the *New Yorker* and other publications, and as a novelist. (Her autobiography, titled *Out of My Time*, was published in 1971). With Marya, Richard had a second son, David, born in 1938. Eleanor Pettinos’ future ended in tragedy. In 1950, her much younger

and by all accounts, extremely handsome lover, Cesare Silvera—who had a wooden prosthetic in place of the leg he'd lost in the war—flew into a jealous rage. He shot her dead, then took his own life.

In 1939 Blow's genteel life was upended, along with the rest of Europe. The fascist regime in Italy took a dark view of American property ownership, and confiscated Piazza Calda from Richard and Marya. They fled to America. Their marriage would not survive the war, though Blow managed to.



He had been an amateur pilot, in the habit of flying directly from America to Florence. (On arrival he would buzz over Piazza Calda and then land glamorously in nearby Peretola.) After Pearl Harbor, Blow was immediately enlisted as a naval pilot, with an assignment of long-haul flights over the Atlantic and Pacific. He also served as a flight instructor at Kokomo, Indiana, earning him the nickname "Kokomo Joe" during his years of service. Piazza Calda, meanwhile, was variously occupied by the British army and used as a storage facility for museum works. Unlike many historic

properties in the region, it came through the war unscathed.

It was probably during the war years that Blow purchased another sizable property, in Clinton Corners, New York. It was the American mirror to his Tuscan villa, a historic 12-room farmhouse with ample acreage. Thomas and Eileen McKiernan arrived in 1946, starting out as caretakers for the estate. They ultimately transformed the property into one of Dutchess County's premier family-operated dairy farms and became Blow's life-long friends. The name of the place, Hardstone Farm, was presumably bestowed by Blow himself—hardstone, of course, being a good English translation for *pietre dure*.

Back in Italy—in 1943, the very depth of the war—Bruno Lastrucci was born. In due course he would become Blow's most important artistic collaborator. His family had been present at Piazza Calda since Blow bought it; Bruno's grandfather, grandmother and father had all worked there, attending to the upkeep of the house and gardens. His mother, Bruna, also worked restoring tapestries and carpets. Bruno was the youngest of three—he had two sisters, Beppina and Elena—and together, the little family moved into the villa itself during the war. Though all survived the conflict, Bruno's father Guido died quite suddenly in 1947, plunging the family into sadness and doubt. Fortunately Blow returned soon after to reoccupy the villa, with the Lastruccis staying on in their own living space.

It was at this moment, as all of Europe picked through its own ruin and considered what it might take to rebuild, that Blow conceived of reimagining *pietre dure* as a modern discipline. The medium



Richard Blow and the Modern *Pietre Dure*

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had a special relationship with Florence, having been developed to its greatest heights under

the patronage of the city's Grand Dukes. That trajectory had begun in the 16th century with Cosimo I de' Medici, who favored polychromatic marble architecture as a way to suggest the authority of Imperial Roman culture. His elder son Francesco was the first to develop a taste for semi-precious stone inlay and *intaglio* carvings.

After Francesco's death, his younger brother Ferdinando I assumed the dukedom, and founded a workshop for the production of *pietre dure* in 1588. The technique was used to make pictures, ornaments for furniture, and *objets d'art*. For the remainder of the Renaissance and into the Baroque period, it remained one of Europe's most luxurious and artistically ambitious decorative techniques, developing in close parallel to stylistic developments in textiles, furniture and metalwork. In subsequent periods, *pietre dure* plaques of particular value were collected as specimens—rather like rare coins—and mounted on custom-built cabinets.

By the middle of the twentieth century the craft of *pietre dure* had not been forgotten, exactly, but it was practiced exclusively in an antiquarian mode, either in restoring older works, or more frequently in the form of revival pieces for the tourist trade. Blow was determined to change this. He later recorded his thoughts about setting up the new Montici studio and workshop:

Returning to Florence after several years of absence, I noticed that the ancient Florentine mosaic art was in decline, and this was not due to the war, nor to the lack of skill of the Florentine artisans, but for their stubbornness in eternally wanting to repeat the usual designs that were far from the Medici masterpieces, and did not bear any imprint of modern art. In this way they had reduced the art to a commercial production of trinkets, to which nobody, particularly abroad where such objects were sent the most, gave the least importance. Thus the Florentine artisans, discouraged both morally and materially for lack of income, would soon have abandoned an activity that is a glory for Florence and one of the accomplishments that distinguish the city abroad. I decided to transform my painting studio and started to make some drawings I had created myself.

With these objectives in mind Blow set to work, creating designs for new works in *pietre dure* and assembling the tools and craftspeople to execute them. He called the project Montici, after the neighboring village.

Blow initially had his designs fabricated at workshops still active in Florence, among them those of Giuseppe Fiaschi, and Leopoldo Menegatti, and the historic firms G. Ugolini and Fracassini. The first master brought into the studio at Piazza Calda was Fernando Nenci, a friend of Guido Lastrucci. Blow had first furnished designs to Nenci's family workshop (run by Fernando's father Nelo) and then hired him on fulltime. At only eight years old, Bruno Lastrucci was taken on as an apprentice: "from the time I earned my elementary school diploma," he remembers, "I worked at the Montici studio from day until night."

By the time he was a teenager, Lastrucci would be sufficiently skilled to be the workshop's leading artisan.

What would he have learned? In short, a very traditional art form. As he says, "the only thing that has changed since the 1500s is the use of electric light." First, he would have translated the artist's design into a set of paper templates, which are attached directly to the working material—wafer-like slices between 3 and 5 millimeters in thickness, primarily of stone, though shell and other materials (even fossilized timber) are



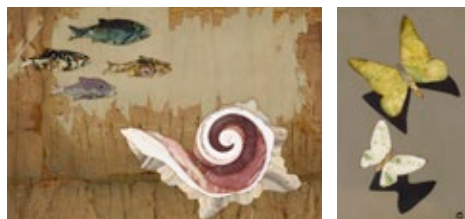
sometimes incorporated. At this point the pieces are of variable thickness, very often fragile yet still hard to cut, requiring extreme care and skill. The artist first saws out the outlines of the design, cutting at an angle. Power saws cannot be used to increase the speed of execution, due to the vibration, which would simply fracture the delicate stone. Now and throughout the atelier's existence, Montici's productions would be entirely hand-cut.

Next, the pieces are assembled and their edges fine-tuned using precision diamond-dust-coated files, ensuring perfect fit. Then the reverse side of the stone is ground down so that every piece

is exactly the same seemingly impossible thinness, to the point of translucency. The *pietre dure* picture is then set on to a slate backing using beeswax, an ideal adhesive, as it can be softened by reheating to allow for slight positional adjustments. Once the composition is complete, the whole front surface is polished to a high sheen using an abrasive, bringing out its figures and colors as if by alchemy. An ever-changing refraction of light—a property technically known as chatoyence (from the French for "cat's eye")—occurs in certain figured stones, making them seem almost alive despite their cool, even surfaces.

Frames were provided by an artisan named Mario (his last name has not been discovered yet) who worked out of a ground floor shop in the Renaissance-era Palazzo Rucellai, in Florence. This was another aspect of Blow and Lastrucci's close collaboration, as they would together select the style and finish of each frame, taking care to match the tones of the mosaic and that of the frames. Sometimes reconditioned antique frames were used, but most were newly made with a tinted lacquer coating.

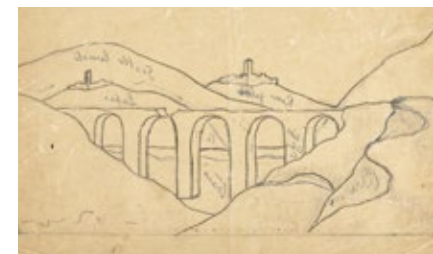
Before the stones could be worked, of course, they had to be acquired by the workshop, a process that itself required considerable expertise and connoisseurship. In many Montici pieces,



variation in figure and color is a major part of the composition—as in the bejeweled hands mentioned above, and a series of tables in which the stone is cut and "bookmatched," that is, folded open to create a symmetrical pattern. Blow also developed radically simple designs consisting only of geometric shapes, the quality of the stones laid out for appreciation like pinned butterflies.

In fact, butterflies do frequently appear in Montici's output, along with fish, flowers, snakes, lizards, fruit, and seashells (rendered using actual cut shell). These pieces can be considered conscious nods to the iconography of historic *pietre dure*, which tended to feature just these sorts of motifs, though typically in a much more naturalistic style. Blow stripped down his shapes, making them extremely graphic—they are occasionally reminiscent of contemporaneous magazines, record covers, or even film titles, as is the case with a series of guns seen in profile. His early exposure to Cubism can be discerned in the frequent use of strong color contrasts on either side of bisecting lines, which produce a sense of spatial depth without reliance on conventional perspective.

Another important part of the Montici pictorial vocabulary is architecture, very often recalling Blow's early paintings, and in turn the work of de Chirico, whose works Blow had now started to acquire. (The two men knew one another, though apparently it was not always an easy friendship, with occasional quarrels breaking out between them.) The quattrocento Renaissance artist Piero Della Francesca, reportedly Blow's favorite historic painter, can also be felt as a presiding spirit in these pictures. Most common are compositions featuring a rhythmic set



of arches, sometimes with water in front—a subject that might well have come to Blow as he gazed at Florence across the Arno. In one amazing series, worthy of M. C. Escher, the arches have wandered away from their facades and stand isolated on a featureless ground, casting long shadows as if they faced a rising or setting sun. In another design, strongly Surrealist in feeling, a single woman stands in a high-walled room, which is open to the night sky, a shadowy moon floating above.

Some Montici works transmit Blow's avant garde leanings still more forcefully: abstracted figures in the manner of Max Ernst, for example. In 1967 Blow designed a maze, rendered in beautiful tones of moss green and ochre; it's like something from a classical garden or myth, but also another Surrealist gesture, an emblem of mystery. This implication is made explicit in an exceptional work from 1973, which gives anthropomorphic life to a question mark; it seems almost to leap out of its frame. In a related work of the same year a tiny figure—recalling Blow's painted painter of the 1930s, sketching his mountain—is confronted

by a squadron of four question marks: an attack of existential doubt.

Those question marks come to mind when assessing the authorship of Montici, a matter in which it is necessary to exercise a certain amount of care. It is no problem to establish the involvement of the atelier itself, as each work was signed with a little *M* in the lower right-hand corner. In an unusual and luxurious touch, this element was made not from stone but from little bits of Murano glass. It is also possible to securely attribute most Montici designs to Blow himself, often on the basis of surviving sketches. But he is known to have invited other artists to contribute designs to the workshop, among them Massimo Campigli, Costantino Nivola, and Eva Carocci. Campigli's distinctive figural compositions of promenading ladies and gentlemen bearing umbrellas, in particular, have often been falsely assigned to Blow. His interest in involving other artists in the project bears comparison to the efforts



of architect Lando Bartoli, who in 1950 became the director of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure—the official workshop of Florence, descended directly from the one founded by the Medici—and opened a museum devoted to the art form two years later. From 1952 to 1954, at Blow's suggestion, he invited various artists to contribute “cartoons” for execution, paralleling the activity at Montici.

Even more nuanced is the relationship between Blow, the artist, and the master artisans who worked with him. Blow himself said that “after the first encouraging experiments” at Montici, “I gave my craftsmen complete autonomy and let them work on their own.” Here the role of Bruno Lastrucci is of exceptional importance. By the time, trusted collaborator. The relationship between the two men remained formal, in some respects; Bruno always used the Italian equivalent of “Mr. Blow” (using *lei* for “you”), and Blow called Bruno maestro. Yet the two were undeniably close collaborators. Lastrucci's artistic contributions

went far beyond mechanical transcription. While Blow had a great interest in selecting the stones, it was Bruno who cut and positioned the material, a process that determined much of the composition. Montici may have been Blow's grand idea, and the compositions largely his as well, but the precision, feel, and palette are all the product of Lastrucci's hands—and masterful hands they are.

In 1954, a disaster befell Blow. Together with his companion of the time, an Englishwoman named Gwenneth Benn, Blow was returning to Hardstone Farm from a visit to friends on Long Island, on an iced-over Cross River Parkway. There was a terrible crash. Blow sustained a serious head injury. He was so badly hurt that he did not travel to Italy for three years, and in 1956, the studio in the villa closed down. When he did return, Bruno was not sure if Blow even recognized him. Gradually he would return to health and to their collaboration together, but from this point Montici mosaics were made at the workshop of Giuseppe Fiaschi, who effectively became Blow's subcontractor—more a business arrangement than a creative partnership.

The timing of the accident was unfortunate, for Montici had just reached the apex of its reception abroad. The first American presentation of the atelier's work had come almost immediately after its founding, with an exhibition at the Knoedler gallery in 1948. The following year, the Museum of Modern Art included Montici jewelry boxes, their tops decorated with *pietre dure*, in its annual Christmas exhibition. Blow was not new to MoMA's galleries, having been included in an exhibition entitled “Romantic Painting in America” in 1943, but this was an important placement



opposite: Bruno Lastrucci, age 14, in the workshop, 1960
lower left: Exhibition announcement for the Knoedler gallery, 1948
top right: Richard Blow, 1958–59



for his new *pietre dure* enterprise. It would be reinforced in 1952 when black-and-white images of Montici works were shown in a survey at the museum entitled “The Modern Movement in Italy.”

The real breakthrough to the American scene, however—as for so many Italian design and craft enterprises—was the important exhibition *Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today*, which opened at the Brooklyn Museum in 1950 and then traveled to eleven other institutions, including the Art Institute of Chicago and the DeYoung Museum in San Francisco. A surprisingly strong section of mosaic and *pietre dure* was included, representing no less than ten workshops, including Montici and several associated directly with it (Leopoldo Menegatti, Costantino Nivola, and G. Ugolini). It was clear that a revival of the technique was underway. The exhibition catalogue gave full credit to Blow for this, in a passage that is worth quoting at length:

It remained for an American artist to grasp not only the aesthetic possibilities of the [pietre dure] process but the necessity of realizing them if the craft was not to die of inanition. Immediately after the war, Richard Blow, a long part-time resident of Florence, gathered a few of the remaining craftsmen together and established a workshop on his own property. Artistically the results have been singularly successful. Fortunately, being gifted not only as a designer but

also with the necessary means, Blow has been able to continue his experimental output where a less well-equipped enthusiast would have failed. His production is based on the necessity of developing work of the highest quality but of a nature and scale to bring it within a reasonable price range. Though the small pictorial plaques, boxes, table tops, etc., so made are not cheap, since both the material and labor involved are relatively costly, they are well within the reach of that large section of the market able and eager to acquire objects of individuality and high quality. . . . Though the products of the Blow workshop at Montici are already known to a limited American public, a representative group is shown in the exhibition toward a wider demonstration of its effective accomplishment.



The emphasis on commercial appeal in this passage was characteristic of *Italy at Work*. The project was part of a concerted bilateral effort to set the Italian economy on its feet again. The Marshall Plan had been implemented by the Americans just three years earlier, principally to ward off Communist encroachment into Europe, while from the Italian perspective, the American marketplace was of utmost importance. The exhibition was therefore both a diplomatic platform and a promotional campaign—it was even chaired by the Italian Minister of Foreign Commerce. It presented to American audiences a country fully recovered from fascism, indeed, a country with which they might instinctively sympathize. In his essay for the catalogue, curator Meyric Rogers stressed the individualism and creativity of Italians, which would be of instrumental value as the nation progressed into a more industrialized future.

Italy at Work succeeded to an extent probably beyond the wildest dreams of its sponsors. The project initiated a postwar economic recovery that—more than any other European nation—was led by commercial design aimed at the American consumer. Montici was a part of that. Blow and his workshop garnered immediate interest from inclusion in the show, including acquisitions at the Brooklyn Museum (a still life) and the Detroit Institute of Arts (a lizard). A separate exhibition at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, generically entitled “Intarsia Pictures by Contemporary Italian and American Artists,” but featuring only work made by Montici, was organized in 1954; it traveled on to the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco and the Frank Perls Gallery in Beverly Hills, which specialized in European modernism. A short

documentary film was made at the workshop in about 1954 (released in 1957), lovingly detailing the processes of “a craft older than the Roman Empire, yet forever fresh and new.” And in 1961, Montici had a further show at the Architectural League of New York.



There was also a showroom called Piazza Montici at 19 East 55th Street in New York City—its dates of operation are unclear, but it was advertised in the *New Yorker* magazine in 1960—which sold *pietre dure* pictures alongside furniture and other gift items. And there were custom commissions.

Bruno Lastrucci remembers completing jewelry pieces for Cartier, collaborating with the Florentine silversmithing firm Brandimarte, and fashioning a set of butler figures for a chain of Chicago restaurants, among other projects.

The peak of success did not last long. This was partly, no doubt, because of Blow's injuries, but his School of Paris-derived aesthetic, very much in

These various institutional showcases were accompanied by commercial attention. It was hardly a conventional profit-making enterprise; the fabrication of each *pietre dure* plaque took weeks or even months to complete. The atelier could not have survived without Blow's ongoing financial support. Even so, the distribution of Montici during these years was both extensive and varied. The workshop at Piazza Calda was itself a sales venue, welcoming American tourists from nearby Florence, and notable VIPs—Jacqueline Onassis was an acquaintance and is said to have visited the property. Montici pieces were also sold in Florence, at the shop of G. Ugolini.

fashion in the 1950s, was also less in tune with the Pop currents of the succeeding decade. Montici did receive one last exhibition in America, in the Bicentennial year of 1976. With the help of his younger son David, Blow organized a presentation at Oregon State University, to mark the gift of representative examples to the collection there. Apart from the collection of Montici at the Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence, it was the largest institutional acquisition of his work. A slim booklet was published on this occasion, with an informative essay by art historian Matila Simon. It was the most substantial publication on Blow's work done during his lifetime, and more or less

Richard Blow and the Modern Pietre Dure

the last word too. In 1973, Blow sold the villa at Piazza Calda, though the Lastrucci family retained a farmhouse on the property. Bruno continued to work, developing his own independent designs at a studio called Arte Musiva. For a time he signed them “B&B,” for Blow and Bruno.

Richard Blow died of cancer in 1983, aged seventy-nine; his ashes were buried under a tombstone that Bruno designed and made in collaboration with Blow’s sons, in the garden at Piazza Calda. Blow’s passing marked the formal end of Montici. In 2002, Bruno opened his own *pietre dure* firm, I Mosaici di Lastrucci, in a fourteenth-century hospital building near Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. There, together with his son Iacopo, he has continued to make and sell works of his own design, as well as providing restoration services to museums and collectors. Recently, he published an account of his life and experiences with Richard Blow; its modest last line notes that, after Bruno’s sixty-six years in the craft, “he is still an apprentice.”

Montici’s story, meanwhile, fell into obscurity. The very thing that made Blow’s experiment so interesting and important—its medium specificity—probably accounts for this. Unlike ceramics, glass, and furniture design, there is little understanding or awareness of *pietre dure* outside of Florence. This may now be changing. The scholar Annamaria Giusti, curator at the Opificio delle *Pietre Dure*, has published extensively on the history of the medium; and in 2008, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection of European decorative art, including many works in micromosaic and *pietre dure*, went on permanent view at the Victoria and Albert Museum.



At the same time, a few contemporary artists have realized the potential of the discipline, among them Nicholas Party and Sam Moyer (also worthy of mention in this connection is Alison Elizabeth Taylor, who works in the medium of wood marquetry). Thus, *pietre dure* is once again being explored as an expressive technique, at the undefined intersection of fine and decorative art. That is how the Medici saw it, and it was an understanding inherited by Richard Blow, who followed in the footsteps of their ambitious patronage. Despite that lineage, the story of Montici does not fit very neatly into art history. It marks a purposeful departure from the traditional style of *pietre dure*, yet is a curious outlier within the history of modernism. But of course, curiosity is just what led Blow to make his pictures in stone, and it led him to a particular kind of magic that no one had seen before, and few since. It’s time to take another look.

opposite: Richard Blow in the workshop with Bruno Lastrucci
right: Preparatory sketch by Richard Blow



Key Sources

- Annamaria Giusti, *Pietre Dure: The Art of Semiprecious Stonework* (Los Angeles: Getty Trust Publications/Oxford University Press, 2006).
- Bruno Lastrucci, *The Mosaicist* (Florence: self-published, 2017).
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- McKiernan, Eileen L. (1922-2019), provided valuable oral and photographic provenance
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- Sandra Rossi, et al., *Il Novecento per il Museo dell’Opificio delle Pietre Dure* (Florence: Museo dell’Opificio delle Pietre Dure, 2018).
- Matila Simon, *Florentine Mosaics and Richard Almand Blow* (Corvallis: Oregon State University, 1976).
- Photography and historical reproductions credit of Leo Bastregghi
- Richard Blow paintings and ephemera, Collection Lastrucci



PIETRE DURE

Works from the Collection of Adam Edelsberg



100

Richard Blow

Untitled (Two butterflies)

c. 1965 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

7 h x 5½ w x 1 d in (18 x 14 x 3 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 4.5 h x 2.75 w inches.

Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.

\$2,000–3,000



101
Richard Blow
Untitled (Triangles)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 7¼ h × 8½ w × 1 d in (18 × 22 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 5 h × 6.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,500–3,500



102
Richard Blow
Untitled (Phases of the Moon)
 1967 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 3½ h × 5½ w × ½ d in (9 × 14 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 2.25 h × 4.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature and date
 to verso 'Made in Italy RB Montici Fracassini 1967'.
 \$2,000–3,000



103

Richard Blow**Untitled (Hand with ribbon)**

c. 1965 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

8 h x 6½ w x ¾ d in (20 x 17 x 2 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 6.25 h x 4.5 w inches.

Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.

Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.

\$3,000–5,000





104
Richard Blow
Untitled (Flags)
 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 9 h x 6½ w x 1 d in (23 x 17 x 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 6.75 h x 4.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Richard Blow Montici 70'.
 \$3,000–5,000



105
Richard Blow
Untitled (Castle)
 1952 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 8½ h x 10 w x 1 d in (22 x 25 x 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 3.5 h x 5.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised to verso
 'Made in Italy IX - 1952 Calderani'.
 \$2,500–3,500



106
Richard Blow
Untitled (Landscape)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 7¼ h × 13 w × 1 d in (20 × 33 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 5.25 h × 10.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,500–3,500



107
Richard Blow
Untitled (Surrealist landscape)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 10½ h × 7½ w × ¾ d in (27 × 19 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 8.75 h × 5.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$3,000–5,000



108
Richard Blow
Untitled (Train and boat)
 c. 1955 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 7¼ h × 10½ w × 1 d in (18 × 27 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 5.75 h × 9 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 \$3,000–5,000



109
Richard Blow
Untitled (Scale)
 1967 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 5¼ h × 6¾ w × ¾ d in (13 × 17 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 3.5 h × 5.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature and date
 to verso 'Made in Italy R.B. Montici Fracassini VIII - 1967'.
 \$2,500–3,500



Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*

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FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI



110

Richard Blow

Untitled (Two spires)

c. 1960 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

12 h x 9½ w x 1½ d in (30 x 24 x 4 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 6.5 h x 4.25 w inches.

Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.

\$2,000–3,000



111
Richard Blow
Untitled (Two pistols)
 c. 1968 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 9½ h × 11 w × 1¼ d in (24 × 28 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4.75 h × 6.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,500–3,500



112
Richard Blow
Untitled (Woman)
 c. 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 12½ h × 15 w × 1½ d in (32 × 38 × 4 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 9 h × 12 w inches.
 Incised cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$3,000–5,000



113
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three arches)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 11 ½ h × 13 ½ w × 1 d in (29 × 34 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 8.25 h × 10.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$3,000–5,000



114
Richard Blow
Untitled (Sample panel)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 10 ¾ h × 7 w × 1 ¼ d in (27 × 18 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 8.5 h × 5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 \$3,000–5,000





115
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three arches)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 3¼ h × 5¼ w × ½ d in (10 × 13 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 2.5 h × 4 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised signature to verso 'Richard Blow Montici'.
 \$2,000–3,000



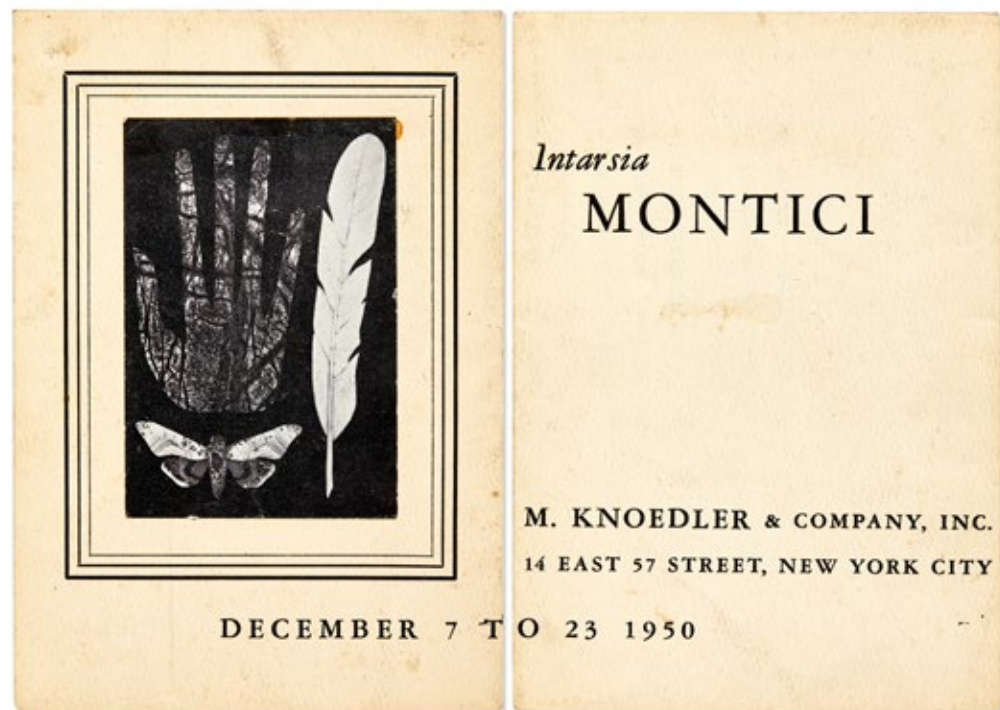
116
Richard Blow
Untitled (Face with hand)
 1969 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 11¼ h × 9½ w × 1 d in (29 × 24 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 8.25 h × 6.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Richard Blow Montici 1969'.
 \$3,000–5,000



117
Richard Blow
Untitled (Six butterflies)
 1971 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 8 h x 11 w x 1 d in (20 x 28 x 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 6.25 h x 9.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Richard Blow Montici 71'.
 \$3,000–5,000



118
Richard Blow
Untitled (Bouquet)
 c. 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 13 h x 12 w x 1 1/2 d in (33 x 30 x 4 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 9 h x 8 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 \$3,000–5,000



Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*

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FROM MEDICI TO MONTICELLI



119
Richard Blow
Untitled (Hand with feather and moth)
 1963 | Monticelli | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 12 h x 9 3/4 w x 3/4 d in (30 x 25 x 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 9 h x 6.75 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised to verso
 'No 240 Richard Blow Monticelli 1963'.
 \$6,000–8,000



120

Richard Blow
coffee table

c. 1965 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay, marble, mahogany

24 3/4 dia x 15 3/4 h in (63 x 40 cm)

Inlaid cipher to top 'M'.

\$10,000–15,000



121
Richard Blow
Untitled (Pistol with knife)
 1968 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 10¼ h × 17½ w × 1 d in (26 × 44 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 7.25 h × 14.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Signed and dated
 to verso 'Richard Blow Montici 1968'.
 \$4,000–6,000

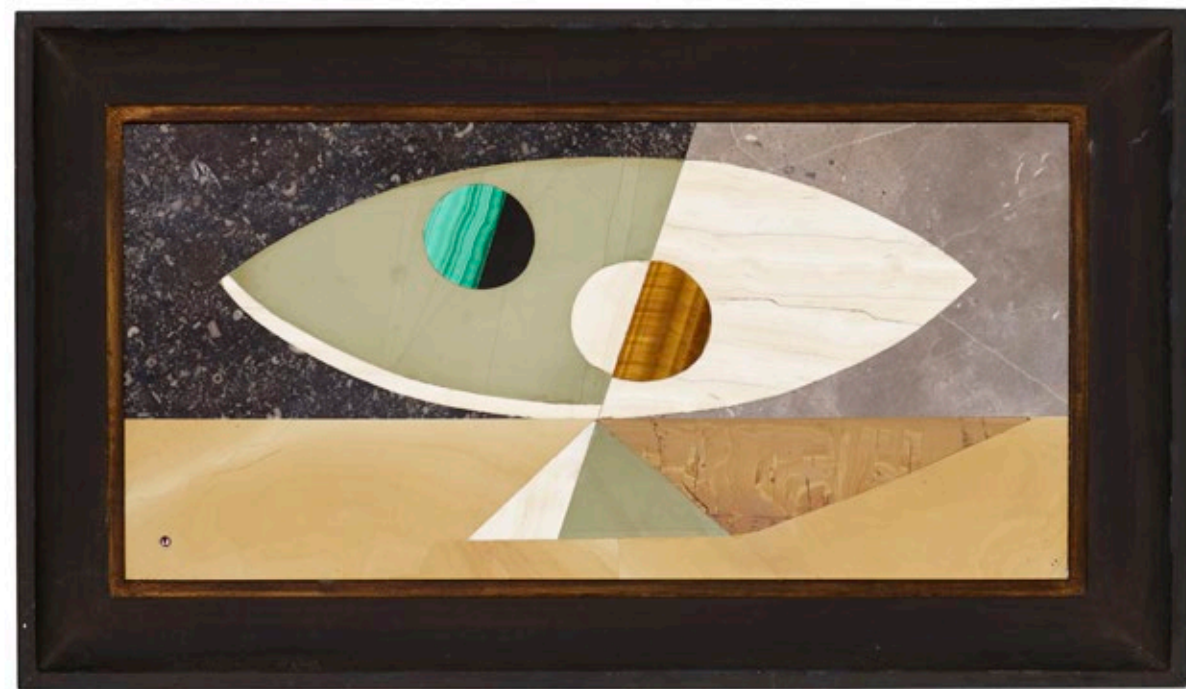


122
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three triangles)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 6¼ h × 5 w × ¾ d in (16 × 13 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4 h × 2.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,000–3,000





123
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three fish)
 c. 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 6¼ h × 8¾ w × ¾ d in (17 × 22 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4 h × 6 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,500–3,500



124
Richard Blow
Untitled (Fruit bowl)
 1968 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 9¾ h × 16½ w × 1 d in (25 × 42 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 6.5 h × 13.5 w inches. Inlaid cipher
 to lower left 'M'. Incised signature and date to verso 'Calderani
 Fracassini VII - 1968 Made in Italy Richard Blow Montici 68'.
 \$5,000–7,000



125
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Pear)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 7 h × 5¼ w × ½ d in (18 × 13 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4 h × 2.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy G-Fiaschi'.
 \$1,500–2,000



126
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Figs)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 5½ h × 7¼ w × 1 d in (14 × 18 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 2.5 h × 4 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy G. Fiaschi'.
 \$1,500–2,000



127

Richard Blow
coffee table

c. 1965 | Montici | Italy

travertine with hardstone inlay, brass

44 w × 23½ d × 16¼ h in (112 × 60 × 41 cm)

Inlaid cipher to top 'M'.

\$10,000–15,000



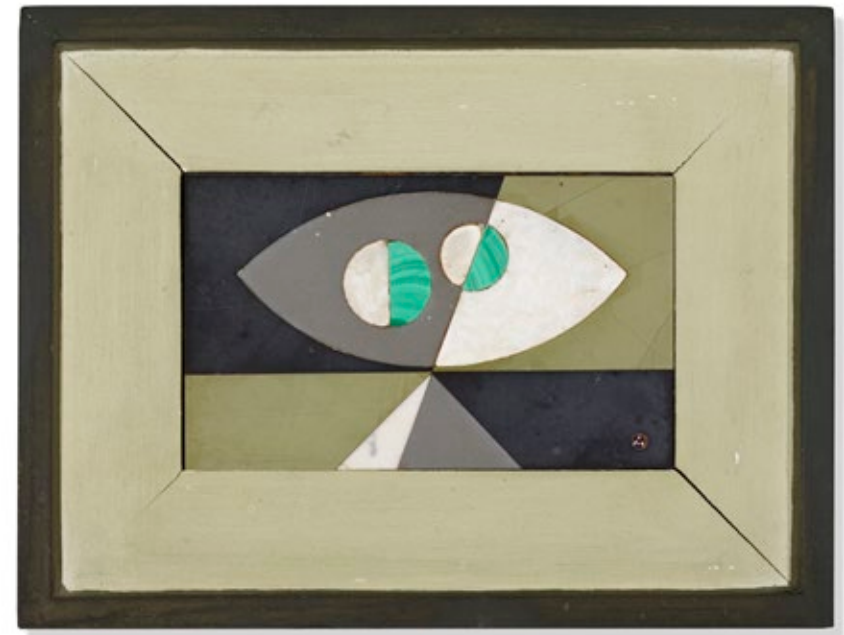
128
Richard Blow
Untitled (Figs)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 5½ h × 7 w × 1 d in (14 × 18 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 2.5 h × 4 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy G. Fiaschi'.
 \$1,500–2,000



129
Richard Blow
Untitled (Pear)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 6½ h × 5 w × ¾ d in (17 × 13 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 3.75 h × 2.25 w inches.
 Inlaid artist's cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy G. Fiaschi'.
 \$1,500–2,000



130
Richard Blow
Untitled (Still life)
 1953 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 9¼ h × 7½ w × ¾ d in (25 × 19 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 6.25 h × 4 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy III - 1953 Fracassini'.
 \$3,000–5,000



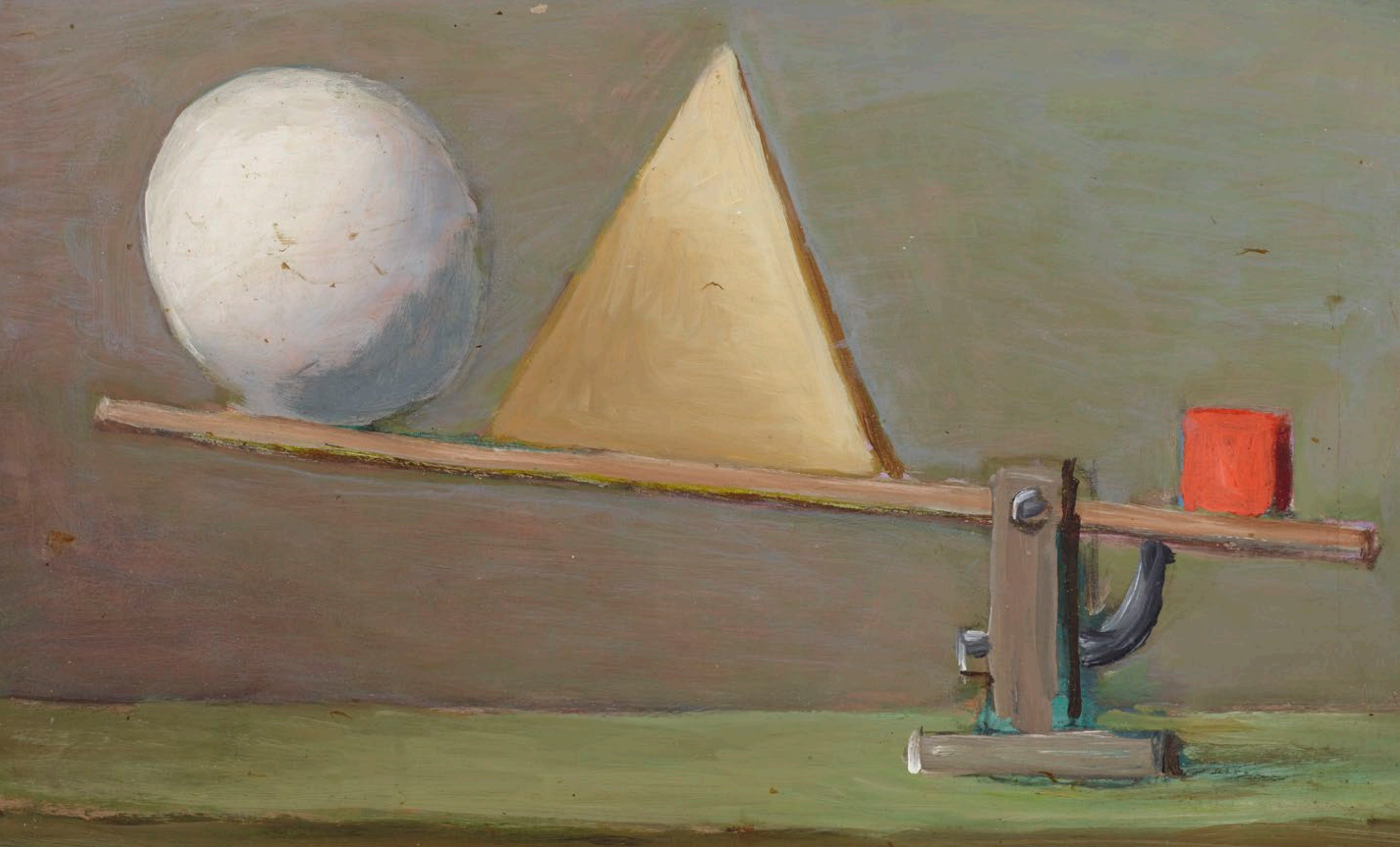
131
Richard Blow
Untitled (Fruit Bowl)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 5 h × 6½ w × ½ d in (13 × 17 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 2.25 h × 4 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Painted to verso of frame 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,500–3,500



132
Richard Blow
Untitled (Woman in room)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 7¼ h × 6¼ w × ½ d in (18 × 16 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4.5 h × 3.5 w inches.
 Inlaid artist's cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,500–3,500



133
Richard Blow
Untitled (Balance, circle and square)
 c. 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 13¼ h × 8½ w × 1¼ d in (34 × 22 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 9.75 h × 14.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy G-Fiaschi'.
 \$4,000–6,000





134
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Landscape with castle)
 1956 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 12 h x 16¾ w x 1 d in (30 x 43 x 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 8.25 h x 13 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy Nenci 1956'.
 \$4,000–6,000



135
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Castle with arch)
 c. 1955 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 8 h x 9¾ w x 1 d in (20 x 25 x 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4.5 h x 6.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$3,000–5,000



136
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three fish)
 1969 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 11 ½ h × 13 ½ w × 1 d in (29 × 34 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 8 h × 10 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Richard Blow Montici 69.'
 \$3,000–5,000



137
Richard Blow
Untitled (Catfish)
 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 18 h × 11 ½ w × ¾ d in (46 × 29 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 13.25 h × 7 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Montici Firenze 60 Richard Blow.'
 \$3,000–5,000



138
Richard Blow
Untitled (Butterflies and mermaid)
 c. 1955 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 14 h x 11 w x 1 d in (36 x 28 x 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 10.75 h x 8 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$3,000–5,000



139
Richard Blow
Untitled (Five butterflies)
 c. 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 9 h x 10¼ w x ¾ d in (23 x 26 x 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 6.5 h x 8 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised signature to verso 'R.B. Montici'.
 \$3,000–5,000



Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*

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FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI



140
Richard Blow
Untitled (Ring tailed lemur)
c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
12¼ h x 10¼ w x 1 d in (31 x 26 x 3 cm)
Stone inlay measures: 10 h x 8.25 w inches.
Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
\$3,000–5,000



141
Richard Blow
Untitled (Crane with snake)
 c. 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 19 ¾ h x 14 w x ¾ d in (50 x 36 x 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 16.75 h x 11 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy G-Fiaschi'.
 \$3,000–5,000

Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*

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FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI



142
Richard Blow
Untitled (Bird)
 1953 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 6 h x 7 ¾ w x 1 d in (15 x 20 x 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 3.25 h x 4.75 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Made in Italy i - 1953 Nenci'.
 \$2,000–3,000

96



143
Richard Blow
coffee table
c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
onyx, brass
44 w × 23¾ d × 16¼ h in
(112 × 60 × 41 cm)
\$10,000–15,000





I44
Richard Blow
Untitled (Abstract horizon)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 5 3/4 h x 8 1/2 w x 3/4 d in (15 x 22 x 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 3 h x 5.75 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy Calderani'.
 \$2,500–3,500



I45
Richard Blow
Untitled (Fish with shell)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 12 1/4 h x 14 w x 1 1/2 d in (31 x 36 x 4 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 8.5 h x 10 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$3,000–5,000





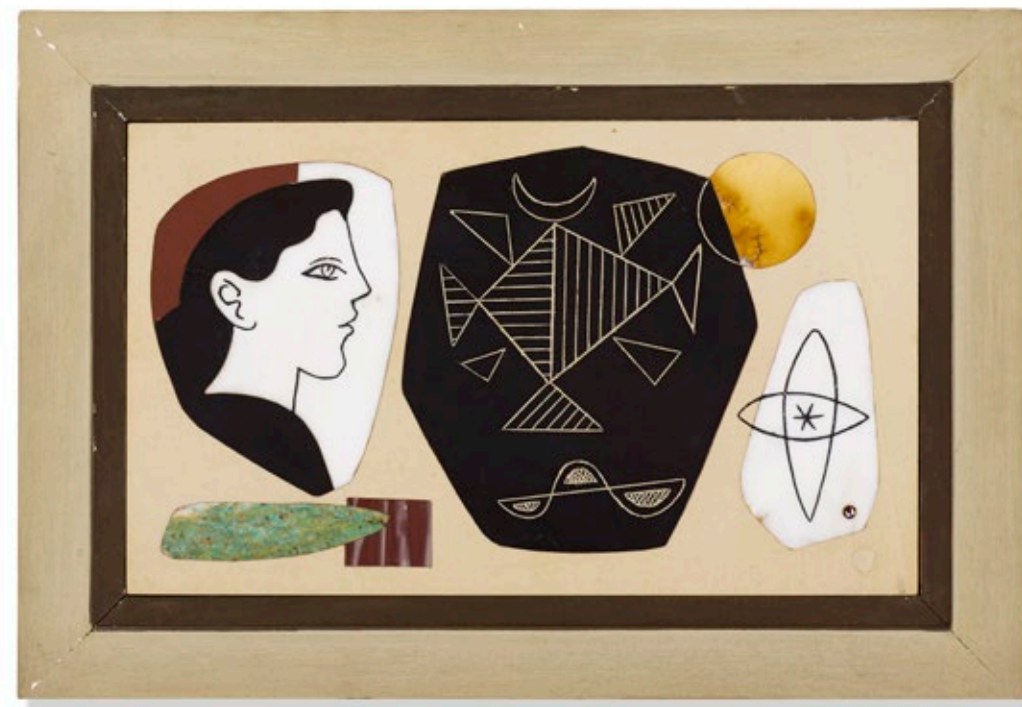
146
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Landscape with four arches)
 c. 1955 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 10 h x 11 3/4 w x 1 1/2 d in (25 x 30 x 4 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 5.75 h x 8 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 \$3,000–5,000



147
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Hand with jewels)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 18 h x 15 w x 2 d in (46 x 38 x 5 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 9.5 h x 6.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$6,000–8,000



148
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Love box)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay
 5 w × 2½ d × 1¼ h in (13 × 6 × 3 cm)
 Inlaid cipher to underside 'M'.
 \$1,500–2,000



149
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Collage with woman in profile)
 c. 1955 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 8¼ h × 12¼ w × ½ d in (21 × 31 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 5.75 h × 9 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'No 212 Made in Italy'.
 \$3,000–5,000



150

Richard Blow

Untitled (Hand and jewels)

1959 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

12 3/4 h x 9 3/4 w x 1 1/2 d in (32 x 25 x 4 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 8.75 h x 6 w inches.

Inlaid artist's cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised to verso

'Made in Italy XII-1959 Fracassin-30'

\$6,000–8,000



151
Richard Blow
occasional table
c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
hand-cut agate inlay, marble, brass
33 1/4 dia x 18 h in (84 x 46 cm)
Inlaid cipher to top 'M'.
Incised to underside 'Made in Italy'.
\$8,000–10,000





112

152
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three butterflies)
 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 5 3/4 dia x 7 h in (15 x 18 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4.25 dia inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Montici Firenze 60 Richard Blow'.
 \$1,500–2,000

Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*

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FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI



153
Richard Blow
Untitled (Surrealist landscape)
 1961 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 13 1/2 h x 16 1/4 w x 2 d in (34 x 41 x 5 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 6 h x 9.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Signed and dated
 to verso 'Richard Blow Montici 61'.
 \$3,000–5,000



154
Richard Blow
Untitled (Five buildings)
 1957 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 7¾ h × 17½ w × 1 d in (20 × 44 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4.75 h × 14.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy Nenci 1957'.
 \$3,000–5,000



155
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three hands)
 1968 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 14 h × 12½ w × 1½ d in (36 × 32 × 4 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 10 h × 8.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Richard Blow Montici 1968'.
 \$3,000–5,000



156
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three butterflies)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 7¼ h × 8¾ w × ¾ d in (20 × 22 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4.5 h × 5.75 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,500–3,500



157
Richard Blow
Untitled (Butterfly)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 5¾ h × 5¾ w × ½ d in (15 × 15 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 2.25 h × 2.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 \$2,000–3,000



Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*

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FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI



158

Richard Blow

Untitled (Hand with jewels)

c. 1965 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

11 h x 7 w x 1 d in (28 x 18 x 3 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 9.25 h x 5.25 w inches.

Inlaid cipher to upper right 'M'.

Incised to verso 'Made in Italy III Fracassini - 25'.

\$6,000–8,000





159
Richard Blow
Untitled (Goliath moth)
 1969 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 8½ h × 10½ w × ½ d in (22 × 27 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 7.5 h × 9.75 w inches.
 Inlaid artist's cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Richard Blow Montici 69'.
 \$3,000–5,000



160
Richard Blow
Untitled (Five butterflies)
 1970–71 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 9½ h × 8½ w × 1 d in (24 × 22 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 8 h × 6.75 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'. Incised signature and date
 to verso 'Richard A. Blow Montici 70 Montici 71'.
 \$3,000–5,000



161

Richard Blow
Untitled (Lion)

c. 1960 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

7¼ h × 12½ w × 1¼ d in (18 × 32 × 3 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 4.75 h × 9.75 w inches.

Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'.

Incised to verso 'Made in Italy 18 Calderani'.

\$3,000–5,000



162
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Red Snapper)
 c. 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 9¼ h × 13 w × 1 d in (23 × 33 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 9.5 h × 6 w inches.
 \$2,500–3,500



163
Richard Blow
 Untitled (Woman with fish)
 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 16 h × 10 w × ½ d in (41 × 25 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 12.75 h × 7.75 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Montici Firenze 60 Richard Blow'.
 \$3,000–5,000



164
Richard Blow
Untitled (Capricorn)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 7¼ h × 10 w × 1 d in (20 × 25 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 5.25 h × 8 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 \$2,500–3,500



165
Richard Blow
Untitled (Whale)
 1961 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 7¼ h × 12¾ w × ¾ d in (20 × 32 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 5.25 h × 11 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature and date
 to verso 'Made in Italy Richard Blow Montici 1961'.
 \$3,000–5,000



Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*

131

FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI



166

Richard Blow

Untitled (Cat and well)

c. 1965 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

7¼ h x 8 w x 1 d in (20 x 20 x 3 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 5.5 h x 6 w inches.

Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.

\$2,500–3,500



167
Richard Blow
Untitled (Lemons)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 6½ h × 8½ w × 1 d in (17 × 22 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 4.75 h × 6.5 w inches. Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature to verso 'R.B. Montici'.
 \$2,000–3,000



168
Richard Blow
Untitled (Fruit in bowl)
 1957 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 8 h × 10¾ w × ½ d in (20 × 27 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 5.75 h × 8.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to upper left 'M'. Incised to verso 'Made in Italy VIII - 1957 Fracassini - 25'.
 \$5,000–7,000



169

Richard Blow
coffee table

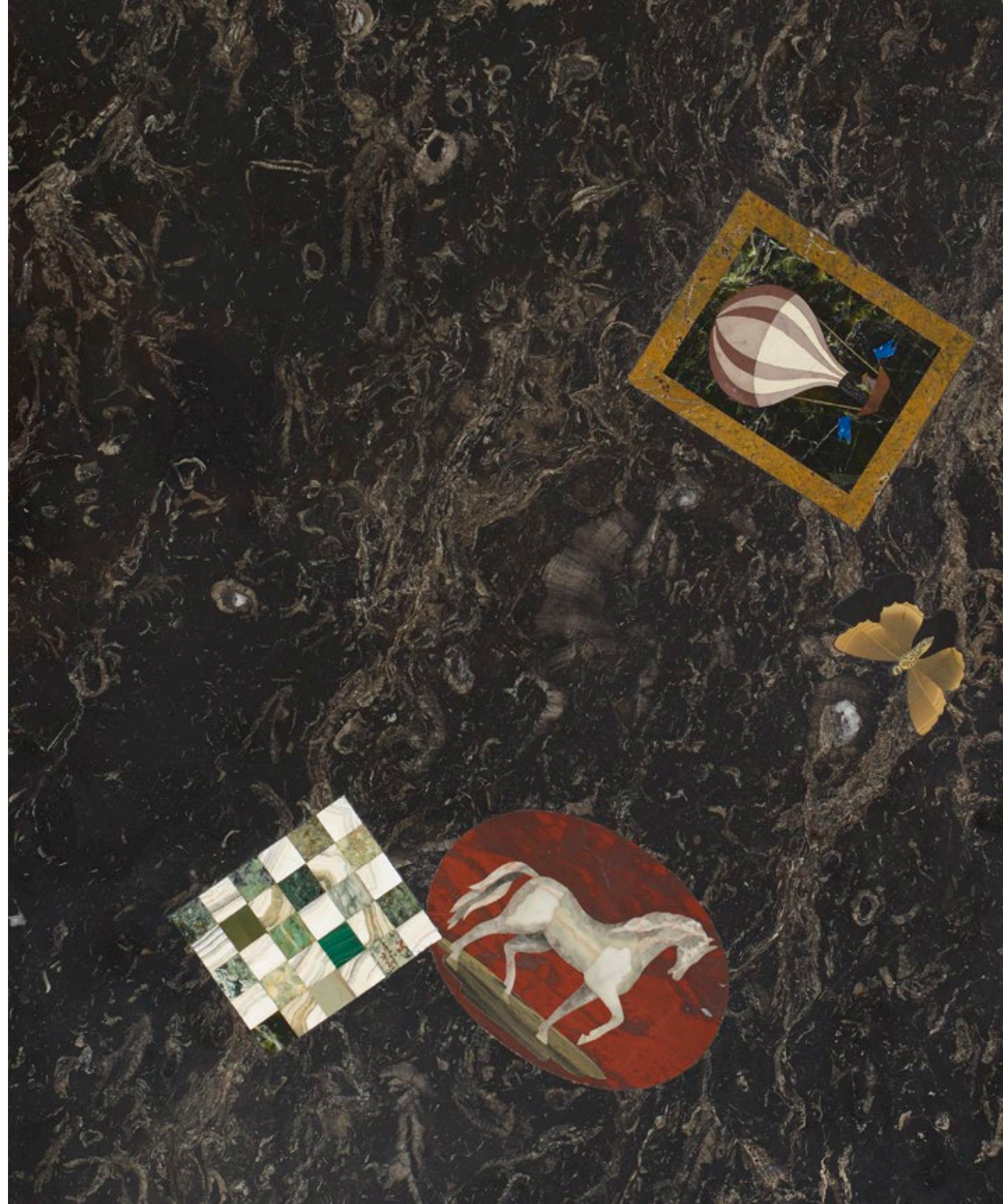
c. 1965 | Montici | Italy

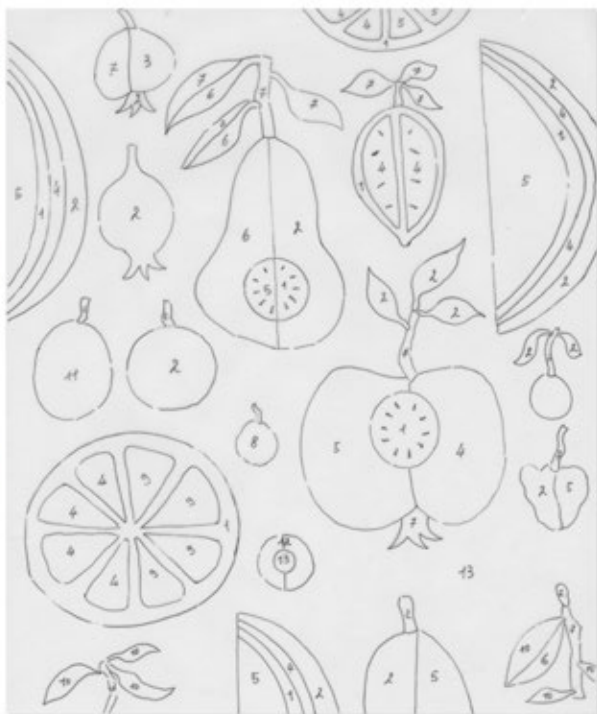
hand-cut hardstone inlay, marble, brass

43 ¾ w × 23 ½ d × 18 h in (111 × 60 × 46 cm)

Inlaid cipher to top 'M'.

\$10,000–15,000





- 1 white chalcedony Caselli, Tuscany
- 2 green gabbro Impruneta, Tuscany
- 3 antique red marble France
- 4 yellow jasper India
- 5 red marble Pirenees, France
- 6 connemara marble Ireland
- 7 green jasper Arno River, Tuscany
- 8 alberese stone lilla Greve in Chianti, Tuscany
- 9 red marble Verona, Italy
- 10 malachite Russia
- 11 antique red marble Turkey
- 12 portoro marble Genoa, Italy
- 13 black marble Belgium



Richard Blow
Untitled (Fruit medley)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 13 h x 11 w x 1 d in (33 x 28 x 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 10 h x 8 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 \$5,000–7,000



Richard Blow and the Modern Pierre Dore

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FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI



171

Richard Blow

Untitled (Watermelon)

c. 1955 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

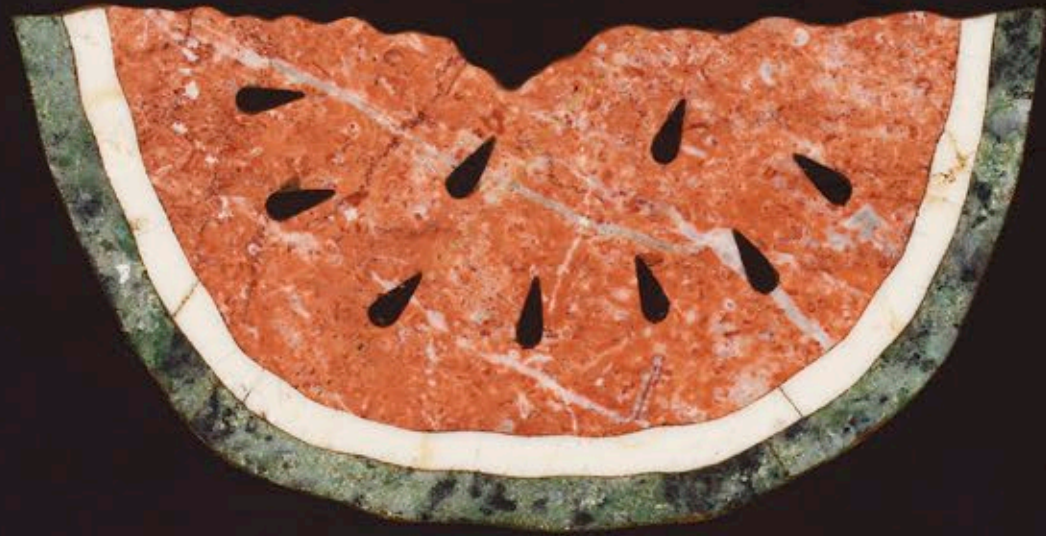
15 ¼ h × 18 ¾ w × 2 d in (39 × 48 × 5 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 7.5 h × 11 w inches.

Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.

Incised to verso '25 Made in Italy L. Nenci'.

\$3,000–5,000





172
Richard Blow
Untitled (Apples)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 8 ¼ h × 9 ½ w × 1 d in (21 × 24 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 5.75 h × 7 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised signature to verso 'RB Montici'.
 \$1,500–2,000



173
Richard Blow
Untitled (Fruit medley)
 1957 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 13 ¾ h × 16 w × 1 ½ d in (35 × 41 × 4 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 10 h × 12.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower center 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy Nenci 1957'.
 \$3,000–5,000



FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI

145

Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*



174

Richard Blow

Untitled (Mermaid on rock)

1952 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

8 h x 9½ w x ½ d in (20 x 24 x 1 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 5 h x 6,5 w inches.

Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'. Incised to verso

'Made in Italy VIII - 1952 Calderani.'

\$3,000–5,000



175
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three vases)
 c. 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 5 ¼ h × 6 ¾ w × ½ d in (13 × 17 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 2.25 h × 4 w inches. Inlaid cipher
 to lower right 'M'. Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,000–3,000



176
Richard Blow
Untitled (Fish and still Life)
 c. 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 8 ½ h × 7 w × ½ d in (22 × 18 × 1 cm)
 Stone inlays measure: 2.25 h × 4 w inches each.
 Inlaid cipher to each example 'M'.
 \$3,000–5,000



177
Richard Blow
Untitled (Giraffe with camel)
 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 14 h x 16¼ w x ¾ d in (36 x 41 x 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 9 h x 11 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Richard Blow Montici 65'.
 \$2,500–3,500



178
Richard Blow
Untitled (Two women in landscape)
 1959 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 14¾ h x 8½ w x ¾ d in (37 x 22 x 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 12.5 h x 6.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised to verso
 'Made in Italy VIII-1959 Fracassini-30'.
 \$3,000–5,000



Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*

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FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI



179

Richard Blow

Untitled (Three butterflies)

c. 1965 | Montici | Italy

hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame

8 ¼ h × 6 ¾ w × ¾ d in (21 × 17 × 2 cm)

Stone inlay measures: 5.5 h × 4 w inches.

Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.

Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.

\$3,000–5,000



180
Richard Blow
Untitled (Two women)
 1967 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 5 h × 6¾ w × ¾ d in (13 × 17 × 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 3.5 h × 5.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature and date
 to verso 'Made in Italy R.B. Montici Fracassini IX - 1967'.
 \$2,500–3,500



181
Richard Blow
Untitled (Two women with umbrella)
 c. 1970 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 11 h × 8½ w × 1¾ d in (28 × 22 × 4 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 6.75 h × 4.25 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy'.
 \$2,500–3,500



154

182
Richard Blow
Untitled (Flag of Sicily)
 1960 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 12 h x 11 ¼ w x ¾ d in (30 x 29 x 2 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 10.5 h x 10 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'. Incised signature
 and date to verso 'Montici Firenze 60 Richard Blow'.
 \$2,500–3,500

Richard Blow and the Modern *Pierre Dore*

155

FROM MEDICI TO MONTICI



183
Richard Blow
Untitled (Lizard and landscape)
 1984 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 10 ¼ h x 13 w x 1 d in (26 x 33 x 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 6.5 h x 9 w inches.
 Inlaid artist's cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso '84 G. Fiaschi Made in Italy'.
 \$3,000–5,000



184
Richard Blow
Untitled (Woman)
 c. 1975 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 31 h × 24 w × 2 d in (79 × 61 × 5 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 25 h × 17.75 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 \$6,000–8,000





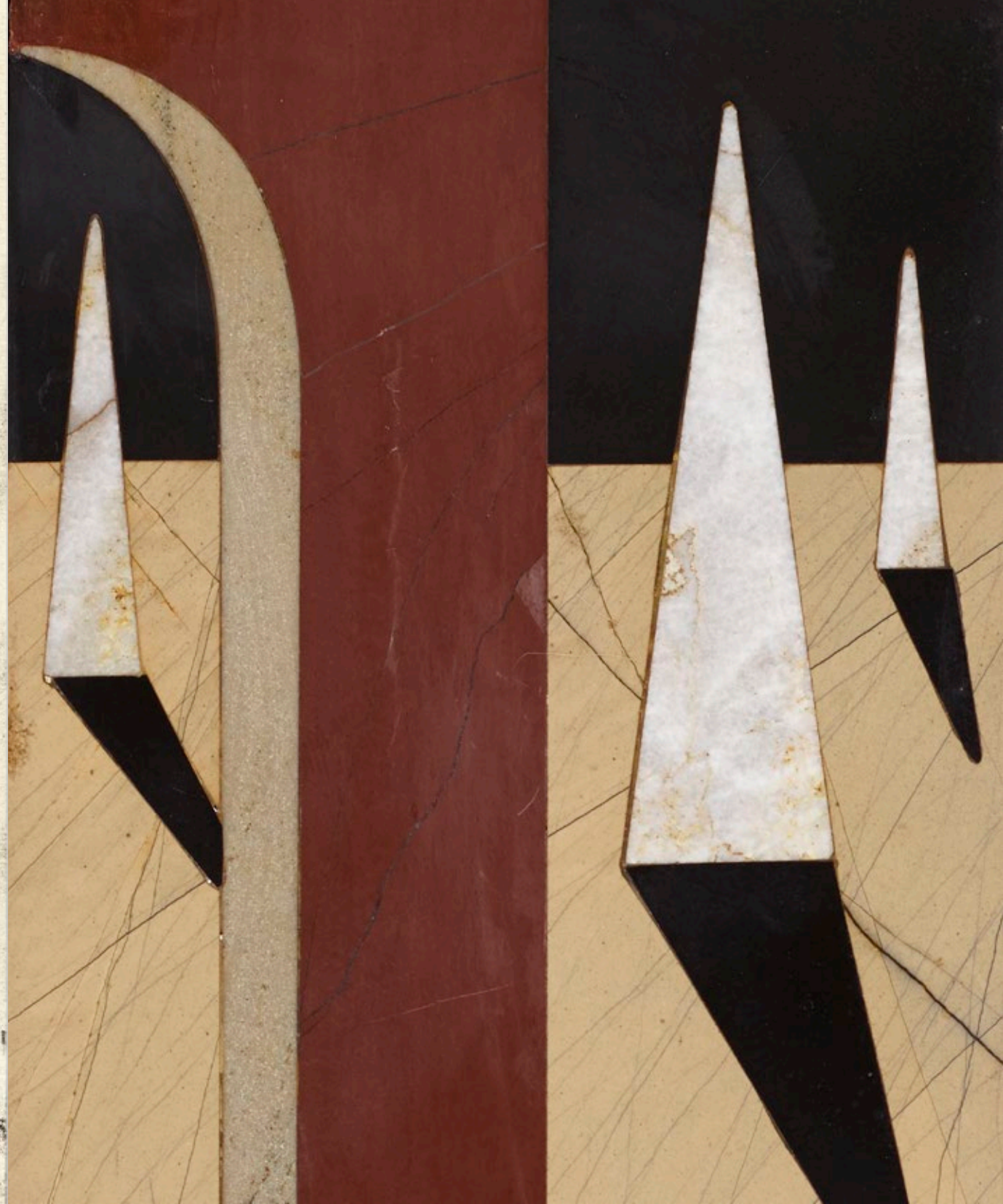
185
Richard Blow
Untitled (Three arches with ship)
 1952 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 10¼ h × 12½ w × 1 d in (26 × 32 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 6.5 h × 9 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower left 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy 11-1952 Nenci'.
 \$3,000–5,000



186
Richard Blow
Untitled (Two women, one nude)
 c. 1965 | Montici | Italy
 hand-cut hardstone inlay in artist's frame
 34 h × 27 w × 1 d in (86 × 69 × 3 cm)
 Stone inlay measures: 27.5 h × 20.5 w inches.
 Inlaid cipher to lower right 'M'.
 Incised to verso 'Made in Italy G-Fiaschi'.
 \$7,000–9,000







Auction

24 October 2019
10 am ct

Exhibition

17 – 24 October 2019
507 W 27th St
New York NY 10001

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