

David Montalto – A lifetime in his work

□ By Peter Sonnekus-Williams

Chateau d'oex is home to the world renowned artist, David Maude-Roxby-Montalto di Fragnito, best known for his unique work on the famous Baccarat crystal.

Working from his studios in Italy and the Vaudoise Alps, David Montalto, is a unique, master artist – craftsman in the domain of diamond stipple engraving.

Entering the artists workshop, the density of books first catches ones attention, looking much like a library, it is a labyrinth for research, which is according to David, essential for the creation of a masterpiece.

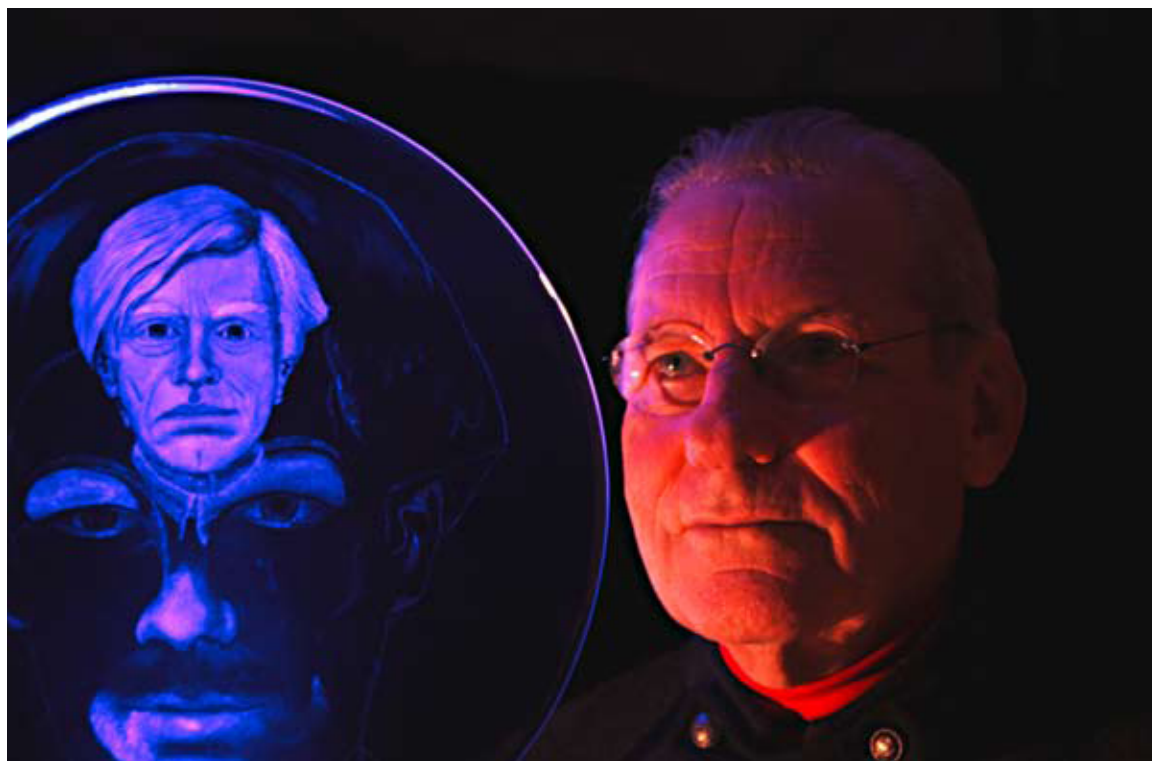
Amidst the artist's tools and "undercover" to escape prying eyes, stands David's latest work, Warhol / Warhol.

'Warhol/Beethoven' inspired the new work 'Warhol/Warhol'

David describes the two creations as the masterpieces of his work so far. The first masterpiece visually fuses together the spirit of Andy Warhol with a classical image of Beethoven (painstakingly etched onto a spectacular disc of Baccarat Crystal). The artist was inspired to create a second piece named 'WARHOL/WARHOL', which displays a deep insight into the persona of Andy Warhol. This sculpture set on a bronze plinth,



The Sultan of Brunei crystal masterpiece by David Montalto



David Montalto with his masterpiece Warhol/Warhol

illuminates with changing colored lights, creating different moods, an apt metaphor for the creations of the avant-garde Warhol.

As I sat in the muted light of David's studio observing his most recent piece, Montalto described the new completed work. 'Whilst developing Warhol/Warhol, I had to do a lot of detailed research on the man. I got to understand Warhol's life as a boy and the road he traveled, which ultimately led him to become an icon of his time. I firmly believe that the soul of a man is already present in the boy. The piece I have now created is designed to capture the essence of the boy's spirit and this I have fused together with the image of a very private man that we, the public, did not know.'

The result is elegantly profound. The image of the boy is etched onto the front of the crystal disc, which encases the image of the mature Warhol, which is etched on the reverse side of the crystal. The interplay between the young and adult image is a masterful stroke by Montalto. The work leaves one with an empathetic and

human view of Warhol and a deep respect for Montalto who has successfully captured the spirit of this complex man.

When Montalto is working, one can only hear a light ticking sound. The diamond point conducted by the hand cuts its mark in the glass as a small compressed air hammer might vibrate upon the surface. The technique of engraving by diamond point was developed in the late 1600's but has now almost become extinct. Instead in recent times a small machine rotating diamond dust with an impregnated head engraves with more speed. 'I prefer to overcome the difficulties of working with a diamond by hand as it gives a different quality, more delicate, and a mystical touch'.

Asking David a little about his past. He highlighted being chosen by the five leading artists of Florence to join them to approach the government for a grant to establish the first consortium of craftsmen for the city.

This also inspired him to dedicate many years to convince the British

Government to take full responsibility for the crafts. David Montalto has become a world-renowned voice on the development and preservation of the crafts, as a country's national duty. He worked as a co trustee with Yehudi Menuhin at the first university for crafts in England West Dean College, which was endowed by the famous collector Edward James.

David Montalto is firstly an artist, his work captures the imagination of many, Royal families, celebrities, corporates and some of the world's most prestigious brands.

Leaving David, his charming wife Patricia and their beautiful chalet in Chateau d' Oex, one is filled with a sense of wonder and humility.

There is so much that society has to thank such artist craftsmen for. They see things differently, they bring about new and fresh expressions and they challenge our minds and beautify our world.

More can be found out about David Montalto on www.davidmontalto.com